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Graduation open house held for teens in foster care

14 high school seniors attended partnership event with the Indianapolis Colts

INDIANAPOLIS (June 12, 2018) – More than a dozen high school seniors in foster care celebrated their high school graduation with a special open house event at the Lucas Oil Estate. Project Open House is a party to honor several teens aging out of the local foster care system.

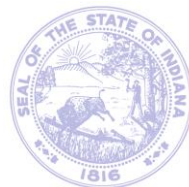
“We’ve all had difficulties in life, and it’s cool that people came together to celebrate us,” said graduating senior Ezequiel Bleifeld. “I’ve worked hard to achieve my dreams, and it’s nice just to have people highlight what I’ve done.”

The attendees, who are all from central Indiana, applied to participate in this joint program hosted by the Department of Child Services, the Indianapolis Colts, Cargo Services Inc. and Connected by 25.

“You’re an inspiration because you’ve already proven you can overcome the odds,” Colts General Manager Chris Ballard told the graduates at the packed event.

Each of the 14 attendees personalized their own graduation experience by inviting up to 25 guests including family, friends, neighbors, teachers and coaches. They also planned their own menu and received graduation cakes, cards and gifts. In the fall, most of the graduates plan to attend college or university to continue their education.

“We wanted to make sure every single one of these graduates feels special,” said Cargo Services Inc. Chief Financial Officer Steve Fugate. “I’ve had the privilege of getting to know all of them, and they’re an amazing group of young people who are going to create a lasting impact on everyone they meet.”



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DCS offices across the state are also throwing graduation parties for older foster youth. Nine different celebrations will take place by the end of the June.

“Graduating high school is not easy, and many of our graduates have overcome challenges that make reaching this milestone all the more extraordinary,” DCS Director Terry Stigdon said. “It’s important that we take the time to recognize their success stories.”

*Pictures from event are attached to this email.

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About Indiana DCS: *The Indiana Department of Child Services protects children from abuse and neglect and works to ensure their financial support. Indiana Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 800.800.5556. Child Support Customer Service Kidsline: 800.840.8757 or 317.233.5437. www.in.gov/dcs*



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